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FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4165  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/FBI WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUDAPEST 000360

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE JAMIE LAMORE, EUR/PGI JODY  
BUCKNEBERG, AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [HU](#)  
SUBJECT: READING BETWEEN THE CRIMES: JUSTICE MINISTER  
SHARES INSIGHTS INTO RECENT CRIME TRENDS

REF: A. BUDAPEST 00168  
[1](#)B. BUDAPEST 0149  
[1](#)C. 2008 BUDAPEST 01137

Classified By: A/POL/ECON:JMARTINSON, REASON 1.4(B) and 1.4(D)

[1](#)1. (U) During a breakfast attended by EmbOffs on March 4, Justice Minister Tibor Draskovics offered insights into the current situation of increasing violent attacks against Roma people.

[1](#)2. (U) According to Draskovics, four broad crime trends are at play currently in Hungary. First, there has been a dramatic shift in crime from Budapest to the rural areas of the country. Draskovics said this shift is explained in part by the improved protection of wealth within Budapest where people have more resources to install alarm systems, bars on their windows, and other security devices. Second, the method of committing crimes has become more violent. Third, while the overall number of total crimes is on the decline, the number of petty crimes is on the rise. And finally, the media has become increasingly focused on reporting violent crime and, according to Draskovics, has helped perpetuate the notion that Hungary is becoming less safe.

[1](#)3. (U) Draskovics shared MOJ statistical data which supported his statement that the total number of crimes being committed has steadily declined over the past decade. In 1999, just over 500,000 crimes were reported to the police. In 2008, that figure had dropped 19 percent to roughly 400,000. During that same time period, there was a reported 28 percent decrease in the number of reported crime victims. Despite these promising figures, Draskovics conceded that the public perception is that crime is wildly out of control and that the Roma are largely responsible.

[1](#)4. (U) According to Draskovics, this negative public perception of the Roma is directly correlated to the shift of crime from Budapest to the countryside. As rural crime increases, it feeds this perception that Roma, who make up a larger portion of the rural population than in Budapest, are more inclined to commit crimes. But Draskovics quickly countered this argument that race is a factor, saying, "Roma are not committing crimes because they are Roma, rather because they are poor."

[1](#)5. (U) This shift in crime to rural Hungary affects the Roma in yet another way. Because the Roma numbers are larger in the countryside, they stand a greater chance of becoming a victim than in Budapest. In either case, Draskovics expects that the Roma will continue to come out on the losing end as long as this trend continues.

[1](#)6. (U) To combat this trend and to improve public security in rural communities, Draskovics shared details on two initiatives he is promoting. First, he believes the

government must convince the people that the government and police are "determined and capable." To do this, he has ordered the reassignment of 1,800 policemen from Budapest to 250 rural communities where currently there is no police presence. This reassignment will not affect the total number of policemen in Hungary, however. That number will remain at 45,000, of which 22,000 are uniformed officers.

¶17. (U) Second, Draskovics said the MOJ will be proposing new legislation in Parliament that will include the following components in an effort to reign in rural crime and better manage police resources: less serious punishment for petty crimes; more serious punishment for violent crimes; strengthening the position of the victim in criminal proceedings; improved protection for police officers; increased number of security cameras in public areas; and improved communication between public works employees and the police.

¶18. (U) Draskovics concluded by commenting on the recent murder of two Roma in Tartarszentgyorgy and other recent violent attacks against Roma individuals (reftel A). He said there is compelling evidence to suggest that the Tartarszentgyorgy attack was "probably" committed by an extremist individual or group and that it was "quite clear" that there is a likely a link between these murders and six or seven other violent attacks that bear similar characteristics. Draskovics stated that the police have been unable to establish any link between the victims and any possible perpetrators, suggesting the attacks are random in nature.

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¶19. (C) Embassy Budapest Legal AttachQ (LEGATT) offered forensics assistance to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) which is the lead investigative agency in the attacks against Roma (reftel A). The NBI accepted the offer on March 3 and has since been sharing internal information about the crimes with LEGATT. Investigators are pursuing the possibility that a serial killer or killers may be involved in the murders. NBI has asked LEGATT to assist with providing an expert who has experience profiling serial killers. NBI also asked LEGATT to put them in contact with the police officials involved in the 2002 D.C. Sniper case. (Comment: John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo, dubbed the "D.C. Snipers," murdered ten people in the Washington, D.C. area during a three-week rampage in 2002. End Comment.)  
Levine